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One Man's Opinion**Legislators Now Oversee
What the CIA Is Doing**By BERT MILLS
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of two columns about Mr. Mills' recent visit to the CIA. The first was published in the Nov. 6 issue.

Congress used to be told very little about what the Central Intelligence Agency was doing. Only a few trusted senators and representatives were informed on budget and operational matters, and they kept secrets to themselves. Now at least 45 legislators have CIA oversight responsibilities and know what the agency is doing.

Virtually all other federal agencies have a published budget they must justify to appropriation committees of congress at public hearings. The CIA's money is hidden in various places in the overall budget, and the total is a secret. However, the senate and house have now established select committees on intelligence, and members of six other committees can get information on the CIA on a need-to-know basis.

There have been several published exposes of past activities by the CIA, including sensational books by former employees, plus a revealing senate investigation. A former agency director, Richard Helms, has been accused of various misdeeds, including lying to a congressional committee. He was ambassador to Iran until recently.

AT THE BRIEFING attended by this correspondent, several newsmen asked questions about Helms, including whether he would be indicted. Such "hot potato" queries were met by evasive answers such as "that is up to the Attorney General or maybe the President," or "ask Mr. Helms."



Mr. Turner

The CIA's new policy of openness obviously has limits, as it should. Unlike his predecessors as director of central intelligence, Adm. Stansfield Turner does make speeches. The CIA does have an information kit for the first time in 30 years, available to any American journalist. And "no comment" responses to press queries, which used to be standard, are avoided when possible.

The CIA now discloses it has 150 officers in 36 American cities whose job it is to gather foreign intelligence of all sorts. The information sought is not strictly military but includes political and economic data and observations. While these interviews are voluntary, many Americans consider it their patriotic duty to help the CIA if possible.

In a typical situation, a college professor may have spent considerable time in a foreign nation of interest to the CIA. Upon his return, a CIA officer seeks a confidential interview to learn what he can. Often minor facts and observations, when put with other information collected in a variety of ways, will help an analyst at CIA headquarters reach a conclusion important to U.S. security.

The Pearl Harbor disaster in 1941 was an intelligence failure, at a time when the CIA did not exist. The U.S. has carried on foreign intelligence since George Washington was president, but only since the Second World War has there been an agency to coordinate such activities on a government-wide basis.

Americans don't like spying, but in today's world national security demands we learn as much as possible about the plans and capabilities of prospective enemies. The threat of a nuclear war makes an early warning imperative. An open society has to resort to the same clandestine tactics as other world powers.